Upgradation of signalling system

*236. SHRI KALRAJ MISHRA:
SHRI SANTOSH BAGRODIA:

Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) the annual target set for modernizing the signalling system;

(b) whether it is a fact that the Railways have not been able to upgrade the signalling system as per the time-frame prescribed by the Khanna Committee;

(c) if so, the reasons for such delay;

(d) whether it is also a fact that the Railways is facing scarcity of engineers for such project; and

(e) if so, what steps are being taken to overcome such constraints?

THE MINISTER OF RAILWAYS (SHRI LALU PRASAD): (a) The annual targets set for four years for modernizing the Signalling Systems by provision of Panel/Electronic/ Route Relay Interlocking, along with Multi Aspect Colour Light Signalling is as follows:

Year	Target (No. of stations)
2004-05	300
2005-06	563
2006-07	594
2007-08	326

(b) and (c) In accordance with one of the major recommendations of the Khanna Committee, a non-lapsable Special Railway Safety Fund has been set up, in which 1448 stations have been sanctioned for replacement of overaged signalling assets with modern signalling system. As on September 2007, 1191 stations have been upgraded. However, there is some shortfall due to inadequate numbers of contractors and insufficient manufacturing capacities leading to shortages of materials and sharp increase in price of the metals leading to non-supply/non- finalization of tenders. Further, due to high growth of traffic in the last few years, there are constraints due to operational reasons also.

(d) and (e) With fast growth in infrastructure activity including of Signal & Telecom, there is additional demand and there is appreciable attrition too. The demand supply gap is being bridged through additional recruitments, improved productivity of existing men and deployment of men appropriately.

Accidents on unmanned level crossings

*237. PROF. P.J. KURIEN: Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) the number of accidents on the unmanned level crossings in the last three years;

(b) the steps taken by Government to reduce such accidents;

(c) whether Government proposes to reduce the number of unmanned level crossings; and

(d) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF RAILWAYS (SHRI LALU PRASAD): (a) Sir, the year-wise number of consequential train accidents at unmanned level crossings during the last three years is as under:

Year	No. of Unmanned Level Crossing Accidents
2004-05	65
2005-06	65
2006-07	72

(b) In order to pre-empt possibility of unmanned level crossing accidents, various steps including levelling road surface at the crossings, proper road signs to warn road, users, speed breakers/rumble strips on the approach road and whistle boards for the train drivers to whistle while approaching the crossings are provided. As most of these accidents are caused due to negligence of road users, public awareness programmes and publicity campaigns through various electronic and print media including street plays, are also undertaken regularly to educate them for observing safe practices while negotiating unmanned level crossings. Joint ambush checks with the involvement of civil authorities are conducted to check the erring road users.

(c) and (d) Yes, Sir. Unmanned level crossings, on reaching the laid down traffic volume criteria of manning, are progressively manned. Recently, as a special measure, zonal railways have been given powers to consider and sanction 'Limited Use Subways' in lieu of unmanned level crossings wherever technically feasible. Efforts are also being made to close down sparsely used unmanned level crossings suggesting their merger with another level crossing/ Road Over Bridge/Road Under Bridge in the close vicinity where traffic can be easily diverted.

Suicide by farmers during last one decade

†*238. SHRI RAM JETHMALANI:
SHRI RAJ MOHINDER SINGH MAJITHA:

Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the period of farmers committing suicides has started since almost last one decade;

(b) whether it is also a fact that the number of suicides committed by farmers during 2001 to 2005 is higher than the number of such cases during 1997 to 2001; and

(c) if so, the details thereof and the number of suicide cases reported in above said periods?

THE MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI SHARAD PAWAR): (a) to (c) The National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB), Ministry of Home Affairs started reporting the data regarding suicides by farmers under the category "self-employed (farming/agriculture)" in their publication titled "Accidental Death & Suicides in India", since the year 1995. As per the said report, the average number of suicides by farmers in a year as mentioned under the category "self-employed (farming/agriculture)" for the period 1997-2001 was about 15,747 compared to about 17,384 for the period 2001-2005. The year-wise data for the period 1997-2005 under the had "self employed (farming/agriculture)" in the NCRB reports is enclosed as Statement (*See* below). However, these suicides are not necessarily due to agriculture related reasons.

† Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.